

Kessler, Ellen

From: alanlorenz@centurytel.net
Sent: Thursday, July 23, 2009 6:49 AM
To: Strength, Stephanie - Washington, DC
Cc: Marlin.Beekman@dot.wi.gov
Subject: Macro Corridor Study Hampton-La Crosse Lline
Attachments: This memo relates to the Macro Study (July20).doc

Hi Stephanie,

Attached is a copy of our letter to you expressing our concerns about the CapX2020 alternate along the Great River Road National Scenic Byway in Buffalo, Trempealeau and La Crosse Counties in Wisconsin.

I will send you our official letter by U.S. mail today but wanted to be sure you received this before the July 25th deadline.

Al Lorenz, Chair
Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission

July 23, 2009

To: Stephanie Strength, Environmental Protection Specialist
United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Utilities Service
Engineering and Environmental Staff
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Stop 1571
Washington, D.C. 20250-1571

From: Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission

Subject: Macro-Corridor Study (May 2009)
CapX2020 Hampton – Rochester – La Crosse 345 kV Transmission System Improvement Project

S-006-002

This letter relates to the subject Macro-Corridor Study – specifically regarding the alternate transmission line corridor routings under study in Wisconsin between Alma and La Crosse. This memo is authored by the Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission (WIMRPC) to elaborate the concerns of the Wisconsin Great River Road National Scenic Byway (WIGRRNSB) that traverses the scenic Mississippi Valley between the aforementioned cities. Specifically the concerns are the perceived negative impacts of locating a high tower 345 kV transmission line within its view shed and /or encroaching on the various intrinsic Byway features along the route.

The following background and definitions should be helpful towards understanding and appreciating the WIGRRNSB concerns:

- Broad interest in the concept of a scenic parkway called the Great River Road (GRR) following the Mississippi River corridor from its source at Lake Itasca in Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico resulted in all ten Mississippi River States establishing the Mississippi River Parkway Planning Commission in 1938. Congress began authorizing funding for advancing the parkway concept in the 1940 and 1950s. In Wisconsin STH 35 was the location of the GRR for most of its 250 mile length. The year 2008 marked the 70th anniversary of the GRR.
- Scenic Easements along the WIGRR were purchased by the State of Wisconsin in the 1950's to assist in preserving for present and future generations the unique natural scenic beauty created by the towering bluffs on one side of the route and the majestic Mississippi River on the other. It is this very unique beauty that moves many travelers of the ten state GRR route to rate the Wisconsin GRR as their Number 1 choice.
- The Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission was legislatively established in 1961 – with the following stated purpose(s) as expressed (in part) in the current WI Statute 14.85: *"assist in coordinating the development and preservation of the great river road in Wisconsin and its embellishments, such as scenic easements, roadside parks and scenic overlooks..."* *"assist in promoting as an attractive travel designation the great river road in Wisconsin and its unique historical, cultural, aesthetic and recreational features along the route..."* The WIMRPC continues to fulfill their statutory responsibility to the best of their ability.
- WIGRR received the prestigious designation of National Scenic Byway in the year 2000 upon the request of the State of Wisconsin and following its designation as a State Scenic Byway. This designation came after careful review and concurrence by a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) National Review Committee. The intrinsic qualities of a NSB include: scenic, historical, recreational, natural, archeological and cultural. The WIMRPC is the designated "byway organization" e.g. to serve as the front line contact and overall coordinator of various activities involved in the promotion, preservation and development of the Byway.
- The Partnership Statement co-signed in June 2009 by the WIMRPC and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Winona) states in part the following: *"WHEREAS the view shed of the WIGRRNSB corridor includes the Mississippi River and backwaters (e.g. the Upper Mississippi River Wildlife and Fish Refuge) on one side and the towering bluffs on the other" ... and "WHEREAS the U.S. Fish & Wildlife brochure entitled Byways to America's Wildest Places states in part ...National wildlife refuges contribute to the intrinsic qualities that qualify a road as one of America's Byways ...*

S-006-001

local residents and visitors benefit from national wildlife refuges being included in Byway corridor management plans and projects..."

The long standing existence of the Wisconsin Great River Road and its subsequent prestigious designation as a National Scenic Byway identifies the WIGRRNSB as a "national resource". A national resource brings with it a special responsibility to all involved to advance the WIGRRNSB vision carefully and to preserve its unique intrinsic qualities for future generations.

The WIGRRNSB pleads that the CapX 2020 initiative will embrace this responsibility including fulfilling the RUS NEPA requirements to "consider a broad range of environmental issues as well as potential impacts ..." (pg 1-3 Of the Macro Corridor Study Report) relative to the afore-listed intrinsic qualities of the WIGRRNSB.

Sincerely,

Alan Lorenz, Chair
Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission
W 4927 Hoeth Street
La Crosse, WI 54601

cc: U.S. Senators Kohl, Feingold
U.S. Representative Kind
Governor Doyle
State Legislators
F&WL
COE
County Board Chairs of Buffalo/Trempealeau/La Crosse
Local Elected Officials

S-006-001

Your comment has been noted. Potential impacts to the aesthetic quality of the areas surrounding the transmission line will be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be available on the RUS website at: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm>. Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be solicited after its publication.

S-006-002

Your comment has been noted. The criteria used to route the transmission line is described in the Macro Corridor Study which is available on the RUS website at: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm>. These criteria and routing process will be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The project is still in the development and planning stages and the utilities have not yet permitted a route for the transmission line.

Kessler, Ellen

From: Sen.Sharon.Erickson.Ropes@senate.mn
Sent: Thursday, July 23, 2009 12:09 PM
To: Strength, Stephanie - Washington, DC
Subject: USDA/RUS EIS for the CapX2020 La Crosse Project
Attachments: DOC026.PDF

Dear Ms. Strength:

I have attached a letter for you to consider regarding the USDA/RUS EIS for the CapX2020 La Crosse Project. I have also sent it in the mail.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Sharon Erickson Ropes

Senator Sharon Erickson Ropes
Houston, Fillmore & Winona Counties
G24 State Capitol
75. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-5649

Your comment has been noted. The criteria used to route the transmission line is described in the Macro Corridor Study which is available on the RUS website at: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm>. These criteria and routing process will be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The project is still in the development and planning stages and the utilities have not yet permitted a route for the transmission line.

S-008-005

Next, given the potential connection of the La Crosse Project with other CapX2020 projects extending into South Dakota and North Dakota, I would request that the EIS analyze the degree to which the La Crosse Project will permit transmission of coal and lignite coal from the Dakotas, along with associated air emissions and global warming impacts.

S-008-006

Finally, the question of USDA funding of the CapX2020 La Crosse Project raises concerns about the best ways to utilize scarce federal resources and support rural economic development. Although the amount of funding sought is not specifically stated in the Applicant's Alternatives Evaluation Study, if the RUS is being asked to finance Dairyland's 11 percent ownership interest in the La Crosse Project, the federal cost could be up to \$47 million in 2007 dollars.

S-008-007

In considering the "no-build" option, I believe the EIS should also consider the costs and local economic benefits of the La Crosse Project ultra high voltage transmission line in comparison to investments targeted to support community-based renewable energy development. It is possible that other federal infrastructure investments may have greater potential to provide local jobs and multiply benefits throughout rural economies.

I appreciate you taking my comments and concerns regarding the CapX2020 La Crosse Project into consideration as you prepare to conduct the oversight process.

Sincerely,



Sharon Erickson Ropes
State Senator District 31

S-008-005

Your comment has been noted. Due to the transmission grid's interconnected nature as well as to electricity's nature - it's generally difficult to identify a specific source of electricity on the grid.

The proposed CapX2020 transmission lines will serve the region's expected growth and help begin to meet Minnesota's Renewable Energy Standard (RES), which requires utilities to deliver 25 percent of their electricity from renewable sources by 2025 (Xcel Energy is mandated to deliver 30 percent by 2020, with 25 percent from wind). Most of that energy comes from wind turbines.

Cumulative Impacts will be one of the topics addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

~~REDACTED COMMENT~~

S-008-007

Your comment has been noted. Alternatives to the project will be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Cummings, Matt

From: Lovejoy, Tom A - DNR [Tom.Lovejoy@Wisconsin.gov]
Sent: Monday, June 08, 2009 12:46 PM
To: Strength, Stephanie - Washington, DC
Cc: Laatsch, Cheryl - DNR; Rineer, Ken - PSC; Koslowsky, Shari - DNR; Kalvelage, Karen M - DNR; Siebert, David R - DNR; Fannucchi, William - PSC
Subject: RE: Capx2020 Proposed Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345 kV Transmission System Improvement Project

I forgot to fill-in the subject line. In case it wasn't clear e-mail below pertains to CapX2020 project

P Tom Lovejoy
Natural Resources Program Manager
Environmental Analysis
West Central Region
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
(*) phone: (715) 839-3747
(*) fax: (715) 839-6076
(*) e-mail: tom.lovejoy@wisconsin.gov

From: Lovejoy, Tom A - DNR
Sent: Monday, June 08, 2009 11:14 AM
To: 'stephanie.strength@wdc.usda.gov'
Cc: Laatsch, Cheryl - DNR; Rineer, Ken - PSC; Koslowsky, Shari - DNR; Kalvelage, Karen M - DNR; Siebert, David R - DNR; Fannucchi, William - PSC
Subject:

[<mailto:shari.koslowsky@wisconsin.gov>](mailto:shari.koslowsky@wisconsin.gov)

This follows our discussion this morning about RUS's invitation to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to attend upcoming agency and public scoping meetings as part of RUS's lead federal agency role for EIS development/NEPA compliance for this project.

As you know WDNR and Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC) will jointly be involved in a separate environmental review (EIS) process consistent with state regulations, including Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act (WEPA). It's not exactly clear to me if or how the separate NEPA and WEPA processes will be related but that's something for others to determine.

My main reasons for contacting you today are::

1. Let you know WDNR will attend RUS's June 23 agency scoping meeting. I'll be there and maybe one other. WDNR project manager is Cheryl Laatsch. She'll be on maternity leave for a few weeks, but her email address is listed above and her phone is (608) 264-8943. You should direct all communications through Cheryl. Other key members of WDNR's project review team will be Shari Koslowsky, Karen Kalvelage and me.

2. As we discussed today by phone, WDNR has had early project planning stage issue scoping discussions with CapX2020 utilities and PSC. In particular WDNR has identified two important areas of environmental concerns regarding possible project transmission line routing and substation expansion alternatives. Where the proposed transmission line may cross the Mississippi River and extend into Wisconsin would have a direct bearing on potential for impacts to:

-La Crosse Marsh (site of a Dairyland Power Cooperative existing substation)

-Van Loon State Wildlife Area (located in NW La Crosse County and potentially impacted by transmission line upgrades)

S-011-001

Your comment has been noted. The criteria used to route the transmission line is described in the Macro Corridor Study which is available on the RUS website at: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm>. These criteria and routing process will be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The project is still in the development and planning stages and the utilities have not yet permitted a route for the transmission line.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be available on the RUS website at: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm>. Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be solicited after its publication.

S-011-001

S-011-002

WDNR recently sent utilities and PSC letters describing these properties and their outstanding resource and/or public interest values. We also included mention of potential regulatory concerns. And we made recommendations to modify project alternatives now, early during project planning, in effort not only to avoid impacts to these sensitive areas but also to prevent potential regulatory conflicts later. I've attached copies of the letters sent. WDNR would appreciate your consideration of points made as part of RUS's NEPA issue scoping process.

P Tom Lovejoy
Natural Resources Program Manager
Environmental Analysis
West Central Region
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
(*) phone: (715) 839-3747
(*) fax: (715) 839-6076
(*) e-mail: tom.lovejoy@wisconsin.gov

S-011-002

Your comment has been noted. Please refer to comment response S-011-001.

S-013-001
S-013-002

Safety rest areas

Mn/DOT will **not permit** the physical location of utility lines or structures to **encroach**. The vegetation requirements remain in force at rest areas and may be of a more strict nature for aesthetic reasons.

Additional Factors

A **Utility Permit** from Mn/DOT is **required** for any line that would affect Mn/DOT right of way.

General placement for aerial lines is **within the outer 5 feet of trunk highway right of way**.

By Policy any utility placed within Mn/DOT trunk highway right of way **by permit** would be **required to relocate at the owner's expense if future highway construction necessitated**.

The entire Mn/DOT Utility Accommodation Policy is available at www.dot.state.mn.us/utility/files/pdf/appendix-b.pdf and needs to be adhered too.

For lines around rest areas contact the Safety Rest Area Program Manager at 651-366-4702.

For issues involving airports and their height clearances and restrictions contact Rick Braunig at 651-234-7230 or email at rick.braunig@dot.state.mn.us.

Mn/DOT's main contact for Transmission Line Route Coordination is Stacy Kotch. I can be reached at **651-366-4635** or by email at Stacy.Kotch@dot.state.mn.us.

Mn/DOT District contacts are:

District 1

WAYNE SCHEER (218) 725-2780

District 2A

STEPHEN FRISCO (218) 755-6553

District 2B

EARL HILL (218) 277-7964

District 3

TERRY HUMBERT (320) 223-6527

CLAUDIA DUMONT (320) 223-6530

District 4

JIM UTECHT (218) 846-7950

JODY MARTINSON (218) 846-7964

District 6

BOB HUTTON (507) 286-7595

PETER WASKIW (507) 286-7680

District 7

JIM FOX (507) 831-8012

RICHARD "KENT" PURRIER (507) 304-6151

*Robert.Hutton@dot.state.mn.us
peter.waskiw@ " " " "*

S-013-001

Your comment has been noted. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be available on the RUS website at: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm>. Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be solicited after its publication.

S-013-002

Your comment has been noted. Potential impacts to the aesthetic quality of the areas surrounding the transmission line will be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

S-013-003

Your list and tentative schedule of potential public transportation projects has been noted.

Kessler, Ellen

From: Robert.Hutton@dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Monday, July 27, 2009 2:43 PM
To: Strength, Stephanie - Washington, DC
Subject: Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345 kV Transmission System Improvement Project
Attachments: District 6 Draft ATIP 2010-2013 - FINAL FROM D6 for Bob.xls

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Stephenie,
I was at the Wanamingo agency scoping meeting on June 17, 2009 representing the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), southeast District 6. During the presentation & question and comment time I asked if it might be beneficial for the project to be aware of Mn/DOT road, bridge, trail, and other potential multi-modal developments in the vicinity of your project limits.

While the following attached spreadsheet of transportation projects is subject to change (and likely will), it may be helpful information to consider in the HVTL site selection process. Additionally the following list is more long term, than the attached list:

US 52 north to south
Interchange in Cannon Falls
Interchange at Hader CSAH 8/MN 57
Interchange at CSAH 9
Overpass at Zumbrota CSAH 68
Interchange north of Pine Island
Elk Run Interchange
possible 6 lane expansion from Pine Island to 75th Street NW Rochester

US 14 west to east
2 to 4 lane expansion Claremont to Dodge Center
Interchange between Kasson and Byron
Interchange Byron CSAH 5
2 to 4 lane expansion from Rochester east to Eyota

Bob Hutton
Senior Planner
MnDOT District 6
2900 48th Street NW
Rochester, MN. 55901
507-286-7595
507-285-7279 FAX
robert.hutton@dot.state.mn.us

Res. Sys	Projnum	#Year	Agency	Description	Length	City	County Name	Program
TH 14	159-010-06	2010	ROCHESTER	GRADE & SURFACE - TH 52 TO CLUMSTED CSAH 36 - ROCHESTER CITY / PORTION OF STATE PROJECT 5502-73 (TH 14)	1.8	ROCHESTER	CLUMSTED	RC
TH 14	5502-85AC7	2010	MN/DO	ROC 52 DESIGN BUILD - BEST VALUE (AC PAYBACK 7 OF 11)	10.8	ROCHESTER	CLUMSTED	MC
TH 52	2506-52PE1	2010	MN/DO	"WINOPI" ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND RIGHT-OF-WAY ACQUISITION AT U.S. 52 AND GOODHUE CSAH 24 INTERCHANGE, CANNON FALLS, GOODHUE COUNTY, MN	0.5	CANNON FALL	GOODHUE	MC
I 90	8590-156	2010	MN/DO	"BRW" UNBONDED CONCRETE OVERLAY FROM 222 M ETH 14 TO 0.5 M W JCT TH 43 - EB LANES	14.2	WINONA		RC
TH 56	2006-26	2010	MN/DO	"BRW" WHITE TOPPING, CSAH 34 TO 0.13 M IN S LIMITS OF W CONCORD	6.0	WEST CONCORD		RS
TH 58	2510-37	2010	MN/DO	"BRW" REPLACE BR 5168 (NEW BR 25025) & BOX CULVERT 6160 OVER N FORK ZUMBRO RIVER, ZUMBROTA - BOND FUNDS	0.1	ZUMBROTA	GOODHUE	BR
TH 14	5502-73	2010	MN/DO	BITUMINOUS MILL & OVERLAY, MEDIAN REPLACEMENT & REPAIR - JCT TH 52 TO MARION RD (15TH AVE SE), ROCHESTER - INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENT AT INTERSECTION OF TH 14 & CLUMSTED CSAH 36 (MARION ROAD); REVISE SIGNALS AT 3RD AVE SE	2.0	ROCHESTER	CLUMSTED	RS
TH 14	7401-34	2010	MN/DO	"ELLA" FOUR LANE ON NEW ALIGNMENT, W STEBBLE COUNLINE EAST TO BR 74001 & BR 74002 - 2008 APPRACCT FUNDS (AC PROJECT, PAYBACK IN 2011)	14.2	STEEBLE		MC
TH 19	2502-23	2010	MN/DO	REPLACE BRIDGE 9487 OVER TH 52 IN CANNON FALLS AND EXTEND ACCELERATION AND DECELERATION LANES FOR INTERCHANGE (ON TH 32 SOUTH OF TH 19)	0.2	FREEBORN		BR
TH 52	8826-40	2010	MN/DO	ACCELERATION LANES, LENGTHEN TURN LANES & MEDIAN ACCESS MODIFICATIONS, GOODHUE & CLUMSTED CO	63.4		MULTICOUNTY	SH
CSAH 24	20424-17	2011	DODGE COUNTY	DODGE CSAH 24 - REPLACE BR 6628 0.1 M IN OF DODGE CSAH 22	0.2		DODGE	BR
CSAH 22	55-622-49	2011	CLUMSTED COUNTY	CLUMSTED CSAH 22 - MILL & OVERLAY, TH 52 TO TH 63	1.7	ROCHESTER	CLUMSTED	RS
CSAH 17	85-617-22	2011	WINONA COUNTY	REGRAVING & SURFACING - WINONA CSAH 17, TH 43 TO VALLEY VIEW DR	1.1	WINONA		RC
MUN	159-156-01	2011	ROCHESTER	20TH ST SW, CLUMSTED CO RD 125 (MAYAMOOD RD) TO TH 63 - GRADE & SURFACE	1.1	ROCHESTER	CLUMSTED	RC
PED/BIKE	235-080-01	2011	LA CROSSE	WAGON WHEEL TRAIL, PHASE 1	1.0	LA CROSSE	HOUSTON	EN
I 90	8590-152	2011	MN/DO	UNBONDED CONCRETE OVERLAY - 0.5 M W OF W JCT TH 43 TO 0.8 M W TH 76 - EB LANES - SCF - SR 175, 148	8.3	WINONA		RC
TH 76	2808-18	2012	MN/DO	"ELLA" MED BIT OVERLAY, TH 15 (HOUSTON) TO I-90	13.7			RS
TH 248	8511-09	2012	MN/DO	RECLAMATION, MAIN ST (ALTURA) TO TH 61	11.3	ALTURA	WINONA	RD
I 90	8590-149	2013	MN/DO	"BRW" "ELLA" DRESEBACH BR 9320 OVER MISSISSIPPI RIVER - BRIDGE REHABILITATION - BOND FUNDS	0.3		WINONA	BR